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Letter dated 23 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 20 June 2014 from the Special Representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and that organization's links with the Bashar Al-Assad regime (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gérard **Araud**

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Annex to the letter dated 23 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

On behalf of the people of Syria and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, it is with grave alarm that I write to you regarding the recent military gains of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq, and the urgent need for the Security Council to take comprehensive and sustained action to halt this looming threat to international peace and security.

It is the primary responsibility of all members of the Security Council to secure and maintain international peace and security. As required by Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council has a duty to carry out this responsibility where threats to international peace and security exist. There is growing reason to believe that the Assad regime — which has enabled the proliferation of ISIS — poses precisely such a threat.

The people of Syria do not want ISIS in their country or the region. The violent extremism of ISIS has no place in Syria — where people have long cherished their country's rich ethnic and religious diversity. ISIS originated in Iraq, during the insurgency in that country. Eventually, ISIS was allowed to move into Syria to establish a branch there, which led to cross-border operations by ISIS in both countries. We have seen this phenomenon in Syria for several months now, and it continues today. Since the beginning, the Syrian people have rejected ISIS and, in January, Free Syrian Army forces launched an all-out offensive against ISIS. In the past six months in particular, the Free Syrian Army has made significant progress against ISIS and forced ISIS to relinquish control of several areas in Syria. Indeed, the forces of the Free Syrian Army were the first to recognize the danger of ISIS and to fight against it, and they continue this fight today.

The Free Syrian Army's opposition to ISIS has not been matched by the Syrian regime. On the contrary, Assad and his loyalists have not merely ignored the threat posed by ISIS, they have actively exacerbated it.

On 10 June 2014, ISIS took over Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, and much of Nineveh Province. It has since set its sights on the capital of Iraq, Baghdad, in an effort to achieve its ultimate goal: to establish a caliphate across Iraq and the greater Levant.

At the outset of the revolution, the Syrian regime released extremists from its prisons. Those released subsequently joined the ranks of ISIS and other terrorist groups fighting in Syria. Since the incursion of ISIS into Syria in April 2013, the Assad regime has protected and assisted ISIS forces in their brutal tactics against the Syrian opposition and the Syrian people. Forces loyal to the Assad regime have selectively bypassed ISIS headquarters and areas under ISIS control by failing, in large part, to target ISIS strongholds in Raqqa, Jarablus and al-Danna (Idleb). ISIS, in turn, has spared regime-held areas in Deir Ezzor and the city of Aleppo, choosing instead to launch assaults on moderate opposition groups and use their resources to impose a brutal rule on Syrian civilians. Evidence also suggests that regime warplanes have offered protection to ISIS forces during attacks against the Free Syrian Army.

The Syrian regime's tactical alliance with ISIS forces extends to their financial support network. As ISIS has assumed control of lucrative gas and oil fields in areas such as Deir Ezzor Province, they have sold their oil and gas directly to the Syrian regime for a substantial profit. While paying lip service to the fight against terror, Assad is thus simultaneously underwriting ISIS terrorist operations — ensuring that ISIS has the financial means to pursue its violent and vicious military campaigns in Syria and Iraq.

Regime forces are not merely aiding and abetting ISIS militants, they may even be training them. The accounts of torture survivors suggest that traditional regime torture tactics are being replicated by ISIS forces. It has been reported that ISIS emirs have served as loyal officers of the Syrian regime and ISIS ammunition has been manufactured in factories of the Syrian Ministry of Defence. The Syrian regime may also have facilitated the movement of foreign ISIS forces into Syrian territory by providing them with access to Iranian visas, Russian passports and Iranian SIM cards. Indeed, according to media sources, the governor of Nineveh Province confirmed that ISIS is cooperating with the Syrian Government.

Clearly, the growing instability and violence in Iraq is directly connected to the Assad regime. Assad is not merely bolstering ISIS forces, he is actively creating a breeding ground for foreign terrorists whose ambition it is to imperil peace and stability in the wider region. With Assad's help, Syria has become the launching pad for terrorist actions in Iraq, just as Iraq once served as the launching pad for Al-Qaida incursions into Syria. To stop ISIS in Iraq, the Security Council must take decisive action now to end the conflict in Syria. As the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, the Syrian Coalition asks that you adopt with urgency a resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter threatening real and deliberate action should the Syrian regime continue to assist and empower ISIS forces. Furthermore, we ask that you apply increased pressure on the Syrian regime, which will compel it to accept the terms and the necessity of the Geneva communiqué. Only a political solution that leads to a democratic transition will provide the peace and stability Syria needs to counteract groups like ISIS and end Assad's wilful complicity in terrorist attacks.

The growing instability in Iraq is not inevitable. The rising influence of ISIS can be stopped. The solution lies in ending the conflict in Syria and in collective action by a united Security Council.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition to the United Nations